

Remarks to Reporters in Paris, France June 15, 2008

Midwest Flooding/Father's Day

Laura and I had the joy of worshipping here in Paris.

My thoughts and prayers go out to those who are suffering from the floods in our country. I know there's a lot of people hurting right now, and I hope they're able

to find some strength in knowing that there is love from a higher being.

I also want to wish all the fathers in America happy Father's Day. So, Dad, if you're listening, happy Father's Day.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. at the American Cathedral of the Holy Trinity.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom in London, England June 16, 2008

Prime Minister Brown. I'm delighted to welcome President Bush and the First Lady back to London. And his visit today is an opportunity to celebrate the historic partnership of shared purpose that unites the United Kingdom and the United States of America. We both share a great love of history and about how we have forged the ideas of democracy and liberty over centuries. And the special partnership that President Bush and I both agree today is a partnership not just of governments but of peoples, is driven forward not simply by mutual interests but by our shared values. Both countries founded upon liberty, our histories forged through democracy. Our shared values expressed by a commitment to opportunity for all, putting into practice what Churchill called the "joint inheritance of the English-speaking world."

So let me thank President Bush for being a true friend of Britain and for the importance he attaches to enhancing our transatlantic partnership, from the work we do in Afghanistan and Iraq to every part of the world. And let me thank him for the steadfastness and the resolution that he has shown in rooting out terrorism in all parts

of the world; in working for a Middle East peace settlement; in bringing hope to Africa; in working for a free trade world where, in spite of today's current difficulties with oil and food prices, there is and should be a wider and deeper prosperity in future for all.

Now, in our substantive and wide-ranging talks last night and this morning, the President and I have discussed a number of central issues. We have discussed Iran's nuclear ambitions. We have discussed Iraq and Afghanistan, where our forces are working side by side. We have discussed the criminal cabal that now threatens to make a mockery of free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. We have discussed what we can do about democracy in Burma.

We have resolved, first of all, as we did some years ago, that it is in the British national interest to confront the Taliban in Afghanistan, or Afghanistan would come to us. And so today Britain will announce additional troops for Afghanistan, bringing our numbers in Afghanistan to the highest level. And let me thank our troops and the troops of America and 42 other countries who are in Afghanistan, as I thank

our forces in Iraq for their courage and for their professionalism. And let me acknowledge the bravery of the five members of the 2d Paratroop Regiment, British men who have in the last few days sacrificed their lives for freedom.

Eighteen months ago, the Taliban boasted that they and their paid foreign fighters would drive our forces out of southern Helmand. Now most agree that security is on the way to being transformed. Last week in Paris, a total of 80 countries pledged 20 billions, with nearly a billion from the United Kingdom, to support the Afghan National Development Strategy.

Our aim is to generate progress where the fourth poorest country in the world, laid low by decades of conflict, can as a democracy enjoy peaceful social and economic development, with our forces, over time, moving from a direct combat role to train and support Afghanistan's own Army and police.

In Iraq, there is still work to be done, and Britain is playing and will continue to play its part. Where we have over 4,000 troops in Basra, we will continue the shared policy of Iraqis taking more control over their own affairs, moving from combat to overwatch in Basra. Our policy is showing success as we continue the task we have set ourselves: strong and well-trained Iraqi forces capable of securing the peace, firm commitments to new local government elections soon, and speeding up the social and economic development of Iraq so that people have a stake in the future.

Our message today to the Iranian people is that you do not have to choose the path of confrontation. The latest rounds of talks with the Iranians took place over the weekend. Once again, we put our enhanced offer on the table, including political and economic partnership and help with nuclear technology for civilian use. We await the Iranian response, and we'll do everything possible to maintain the dialogue. But we are also clear that if Iran continues to ignore united resolutions, to ignore our offers

of partnership, we have no choice but to intensify sanctions. And so today Britain will urge Europe, and Europe will agree, to take further sanctions against Iran.

First of all, we will take action today that will freeze the overseas assets of the biggest bank in Iran, the Bank Melli.

And second, action will start today for a new phase of sanctions on oil and gas. And I will repeat that we will take any necessary actions so that Iran is aware of the choice it has to make: to start to play its part as a full and respected member of the international community or face further isolation.

We discussed the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe. In recent weeks, under Robert Mugabe's increasingly desperate and criminal regime, Zimbabwe has seen 53 killings, 2,000 beatings, the displacement of 30,000 people, the arrest and detention of opposition leaders, including Morgan Tsvangirai, and this is wholly unacceptable. Mugabe must not be allowed to steal the election that is now less than 2 weeks away. And that is why we call for Zimbabwe to accept a United Nations human rights envoy to visit Zimbabwe now and to accept the international monitors from all parts of the world who are available to ensure that this is a free and fair election.

We agreed that at the G-8 in Japan, the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. would propose a plan to recruit and train health workers for the poorest countries. To save the lives of mothers who needlessly die in childbirth, we are developing proposals to tackle the diseases that bring needless death and suffering, including malaria, AIDS, and neglected tropical diseases. And we agreed also to work together to ensure G-8 commitment to scale up funding on education and get the remaining 72 million children who do not go to school today into school.

The world oil prices trebled in recent months. In the right of this, I welcome Saudi Arabia's initiative to host a producer-consumer summit in Jeddah on the 22d

of June. And we will all work together to ensure an enhanced dialogue between oil producers and consumers.

And the President and I also agreed that over the next few weeks, we need to press hard to achieve a world trade deal. Both of us are ensured that this could unlock new opportunities for the world economy. It would also help reduce high global food prices.

Finally, we go from here to Northern Ireland. The United States has played an essential role in securing peace in Northern Ireland and helping the people of Northern Ireland move away from conflict to, potentially, a new prosperity. And I want to thank President Bush for his personal efforts to speed up the Northern Ireland peace process and to make sure that there is investment in Northern Ireland, not just from the rest of the United Kingdom but from America.

And I thank him for his work to ensure that the recent investment conference in Northern Ireland was a huge success. And there will be further announcements of jobs in Northern Ireland today. America has played a huge role in this peace process, and President Bush is to be thanked by all the people of the United Kingdom for what he has done.

So, Mr. President, I thank you again for your friendship, for your leadership, for your commitment to us continuing to work together to solve the challenges facing the world. I'm pleased you're here. I value the gains we've made together, and I look forward to our continued friendship.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. I thank you very much for your friendship. Thank you for your hospitality. This is—this has been a good trip. By the way, some are speculating this is my last trip. Let them speculate. Who knows? [*Laughter*] But it's been a—we had a great dinner last night. I want to thank you and Sarah. And thanks for calling together the historians. It's a—you know, Great Britain has produced great historians. And I am—

I love reading a lot of their works, and it was so kind of you to have them over. And the food was good too. [*Laughter*]

And also, we had a great visit yesterday. Laura and I went to see Her Majesty the Queen. And I thank her for her hospitality. And then yesterday at the Embassy, thanks to our Ambassador, I had the opportunity to speak to some of your soldiers. And I was—listened to their stories of courage and bravery and sacrifice, and it was so—really touching. And I really appreciate the British people supporting the people who wear the uniform. And I am looking forward to going to Northern Ireland this evening. You've taken the lead. We're just pleased to help. And hopefully, this visit will help keep the process moving.

First thing about Gordon Brown, he's tough on terror. And I appreciate it, and so should the people of Great Britain and the world. He fully understands that while some want to say that the terrorist threat is gone or there's nothing to worry about, it is something to worry about. And he was—you were tested early in your Prime Ministership. You dealt with the challenge. And I appreciate your continued focus and your understanding that we've got to work together to protect our people and your understanding that freedom is transformative, and the ultimate way to succeed against these extremists who use murder as a way to achieve their political objectives is to marginalize them through the advance of liberty.

And that's what we're doing in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. And it is tough work. It's hard to take a society that had been ravished by brutality and convince people to take the risk necessary to work for civil society and freedom for women and to educate their children. But I believe it's necessary work for the sake of peace and for our security. And I believe it's in the moral interests of comfortable nations to help others realize the blessings of liberty. Oh, for some that sounds like hopeless idealism. For those of us involved with

making public policy necessary to protect our people, it is the only realistic way to guarantee the peace for our people.

And so you've been strong on Afghanistan and Iraq, and I appreciate it. But more importantly, the people of Afghanistan and Iraq appreciate it. The march to democracy is never smooth. We've had our own history. America is viewed as a great democracy. Just remember, many of our citizens were enslaved for a long period of time before we finally got it right.

But it's in our interests to help these folks. It's in our interests little girls go to school in Afghanistan. It's in our interests that there be free elections in Iraq. And it's in our interests that we help these governments survive. And it's taken sacrifice from our people; I understand that. The fundamental question history is going to look back on is, did we understand the duty that we've been called to do to protect ourselves and help others? And this Prime Minister has understood the duty.

No, I know there's a lot of discussion here in the British press about, well, you know, is there going to be enough troops or not enough troops and all that business. Is he trying to distance this, that, and the other? It's just typical. But I just want to remind you that he has left more troops in Iraq than initially anticipated. And like me—we'll be making our decisions based upon the conditions on the ground, the recommendation of our commanders, without an artificial timetable set by politics.

I thank you for your troop announcement today in Afghanistan as well. Then you issued a strong statement on Iran. It was a clear statement, and it was a strong statement, and it was a necessary statement, because the free world has an obligation to work together in concert to prevent the Iranians from having the know-how to develop a nuclear weapon. And now is the time to work together to get it done, and I appreciate your statement.

Hopefully, the Iranian leadership will take a different position than the one

they've taken in the past, which is basically, who cares what the free world says; we're going to—we'll go our own way. And now has faced—they face serious isolation, and the people who are suffering are the Iranian people. We have no qualms with the Iranian people. As a matter of fact, we want the Iranian people to thrive. It's in our interests that there be a hopeful society. It's their Government who has denied them their rightful place in the world.

And so I want to thank you very much for working hard to, you know, to help keep this coalition together to provide pressure necessary so we can solve the problem diplomatically. That's my first choice. Iranians must understand all options are on the table, however.

Thank you for your strong words on Zimbabwe. And I—you know, you obviously are emotional on the subject. And I don't blame you, because the people of Zimbabwe have suffered under Mugabe leadership. And we will work with you to ensure these good folks have free and fair elections to the extent—best extent possible, which obviously Mr. Mugabe does not want to have.

We talked about Darfur. We talked about Burma. I strongly support your health care worker initiative. I'm looking forward to going to the G-8 to articulate that. And we expect the people of the G-8—the leaders of the G-8 countries to fulfill their obligations, because last year we met, and we had a—we discussed a lot of issues, including HIV/AIDS and malaria on the continent of Africa. And they all came forth and said, we'll match the United States. Except most nations haven't matched the United States to date except for Great Britain. You know, they haven't done their part in matching the United States.

And so my message at the G-8 is: Looking forward to working with you; thanks for coming to the meeting; just remember, there are people needlessly dying on the continent of Africa today. And we expect

you to be more than pledge makers; we expect you to be checkwriters for humanitarian reasons.

Now, we did talk about energy and Doha. I'm concerned about Doha. I'm concerned that while we're making some progress on the agricultural side, that nations such as Brazil and India and China are not making corresponding openings on manufacturing and service—and the service sector on their part. And in order to have a successful round, which I believe is essential, and so does Gordon—to fight off protectionism and to help poor nations develop, that now is the time to get a Doha round completed. And in order to do so, there has to be more movement on the manufacturing and service sector so there can be a fair and equitable deal.

Finally, we talked about global climate change. And I briefed Gordon on our strategy for the major economies meeting to, hopefully, reach an international goal for 2050 that will have intermediate strategies that are binding on each nation within the U.N. framework. And the reason why I believe this is the right approach to take—that unless China and India are a part of a binding international agreement—and the United States—then we will not have effective policy in dealing with climate change. It might make us all feel good, but the results won't be satisfactory. And so hopefully, in Seoul, South Korea, coming up, there will be a major economy meeting agreement on a long-term goal with binding commitments.

Mr. Prime Minister, all in all, it's been a great meeting. Thank you for the conversation, and thank you for your friendship.

Prime Minister Brown. Thank you. Questions.

*British and U.S. Troop Levels in Iraq/
Afghanistan*

Q. Nick Robinson, BBC News.

President Bush. Who? Can you say his name again, please? [Laughter]

Q. Good to have you here.

President Bush. Yes. Missed the hat. [Laughter]

Q. Prime Minister, isn't it time to withdraw British troops from Iraq in order to send them where the military really needs them, to Afghanistan, or are you too worried about his reaction if you do?

And, Mr. President, are you prepared—

President Bush. We miss you, Nick. We miss you, buddy.

Q. Are you prepared to see British troops withdrawn from Iraq while you're still in office, or are you concerned about the symbolic significance of that?

Prime Minister Brown. Can I just say that in Iraq, there is a job to be done, and we will continue to do the job. And there's going to be no artificial timetable. And the reason is that we are making progress—making progress in the Iraqis themselves being trained up to run their own armed forces and, of course, to be the police men and women in their areas. And we're making progress also because we hope local government elections will happen later this year. We hope to return the airport that we are responsible for in Basra to civilian use as well. And most of all, in the next stage, we want to see the economic and social development of Basra and the southern part of Iraq proceed so that people have a stake in the future.

So yes, we are moving from what we call combat to overwatch, and that's been announced many months ago. Yes, as a result of what happened in Basra a few months ago, we have kept higher the level of troops that are necessary, but yes, also, we have a job that's still to be done. And that job is to train up the forces; that job is to speed up economic and social development; and that job is to have local government elections so that Iraqis can take control of their own democracy. And I'm determined that we continue to do that job.

And that will happen not at the cost of lesser troops for Afghanistan, but with more

troops going to Afghanistan. The Defense Secretary will announce later this afternoon that we will send more troops to Afghanistan. The reason is that we want to help the Afghans train up their own Army and their own police forces. And the reason is, we want to have better equipment in Iraq—in Afghanistan in future. And therefore, there's going to be a reconfiguration of our troops. There will be some coming out and some more going in, and that—an overall increase in the numbers so that we will have the highest level of troops in Afghanistan. You cannot trade numbers between the two countries.

There is a job to do in Iraq, and I've described it. And there is a job to do in Afghanistan, and we will continue to do it. And the fact that 43 countries are helping us in Afghanistan and 80 countries are supporting the economic and social development of Afghanistan shows how in this country, which is one of the poorest in the world, we are trying to make progress more quickly. So the announcement will come later today from the Defense Secretary.

President Bush. We're withdrawing troops. We anticipate the 30,000 surge troops will be coming home by July—more or less 30,000. And so the plan is, bring them home based upon success. That's what we expect the British Prime Minister to do. That's what I'm doing—that as the Iraqis are trained up, as they're taking more responsibility, as the security situations decline, as the economy is improved, as political reconciliation is taking place, we can bring more troops home. That's the whole purpose of the strategy. And so give the Iraqis more responsibility. Let them take more—be in more charge of their own security and their own Government, and that's what's happening.

And so yes, I mean—look, the key thing for me is that I have—you know, is that Gordon shares with me his plans. He listens to—and he talks to his commanders, and he picks up the phone and says,

“Here's what we're thinking.” So there's no surprises. And as I said yesterday on TV here, I have no problem with how Gordon Brown is dealing with Iraq. He's been a good partner and—but, as I told you, we're bringing ours home too.

Military Operations in Afghanistan/Oil Supply

Q. Mr. President, I'd like to ask you about recent events along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Do you back President Karzai when he says he may send his troops into Pakistan to take care of some of the militants who are launching attacks on his territory? And do you think that the agreements that the new Government of Pakistan is pursuing with some of the militant tribes in that area amount to the sort of appeasement that you talked about in your speech last month?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, I'd like to ask you about the meeting—upcoming meeting in Saudi Arabia. What do you expect to come out of that meeting? And do you think it would be helpful if your friend there, standing there, Mr. Bush, were to see you in Jeddah at that meeting?

President Bush. Our strategy is to deny safe haven to extremists who would do harm to innocent people. And that's the strategy of Afghanistan. It needs to be the strategy of Pakistan. It's in all our interests to prevent those who murder innocent people to achieve political objectives to gain safe haven.

And so we'd look forward to working—I mean, one thing that can happen is, there can be, you know, more dialogue between the Pak Government and the Afghan Government. Now, there was—in the past, they had a jirga amongst tribal leaders in the region on both—from both sides of the border that made a difference. And I think that would be a good idea to restart the jirga process.

I know there needs to be dialogue between the intel services between the respective countries. And I know there needs

to be better cooperation, and there needs to be trilateral cooperation on the border—trilateral being Pak, Afghan, and coalition border patrols—to prevent people from coming back and forth across the border.

And there's a lot of common ground. I repeat: It is in no one's interest that extremists have a safe haven from which to operate. And I'm, you know—I mean—and obviously, it's a testy situation there. And if I'm the President of a country and people are coming from one country to another—allegedly coming from one country to another—to kill innocent civilians on my side, I'd be concerned about it. But we can help. We can help calm the situation down and develop a strategy that will prevent these extremists from, you know, from developing safe haven and having freedom of movement.

Prime Minister Brown. Can I say, I'm traveling to Jeddah next Sunday at the invitation of the King of Saudi Arabia. And I want a long-term dialogue, and this is part of a process, not an event, between oil producers and oil consumers. I think there is a view developing that the price of oil is increasingly dependent not just on today's demand and supply factors but on what people perceive as demand outstripping supply next year, in the medium term, and in the long term.

And I want to tell the King of Saudi Arabia and others who are there that the world will build more nuclear power. And I have suggested that on present trends, it would be about 1,000 nuclear power stations over the next 30 years. The world will increase its use of renewables. The world will increase its use of coal. It will lessen its dependence on oil, and that the world is determined to make a more efficient use of oil.

And I think this dialogue between producers and consumers is absolutely essential. President Bush has just been in Saudi Arabia. I have not been there recently. I want to go and talk to the King and talk to others there about what I believe should

be a process whereby we understand what are the pressures on demand in future years, as well as we understand the pressures on supply. And I believe that that long-term debate about the future can have an effect on today's markets.

Now, that's what the debate is about. And that is part of a process that I hope will continue, if necessary, with a meeting in London later and with further meetings, so that there is a genuine dialogue between producers and consumers about what is the most worrying situation in the world at the moment, and that is the trebling of the price of oil.

President's Decisionmaking/Freedom Agenda/Lisbon Treaty

Q. Mr. President, in his last major speech, Tony Blair said on Iraq: "Hand on heart, I did what I thought was right. But if I got it wrong, I'm sorry." Is it possible you got it wrong? Would you share, at this point, those slightly more reflective sentiments? And in particular, should you, in retrospect, perhaps have concentrated a little more on Afghanistan?

And could I ask the Prime Minister, is the Lisbon Treaty dead in the water now? And if so, what happens next for Europe?

President Bush. History will judge the tactics. History will judge whether or not, you know, more troops were needed earlier, troops could have been positioned here better or not. Removing Saddam Hussein was not wrong. It was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do for our security, right thing to do for peace, and the right thing to do for 25 million Iraqis.

And now the fundamental question is, will we have the willpower and the patience to help the Iraqis develop a democracy in the heart of the Middle East? It's a democracy that's not going to look like America. It's not going to look like Great Britain. But it's a democracy that will have government responsive to the people. People say: "Was that worth it? Is it necessary?" Absolutely, it's necessary, if you believe we're

in an ideological war being—the theaters of which right now—the most notable theaters are Afghanistan and Iraq.

The strategic implications of a free Iraq are significant for our future. For example, a free Iraq will make it easier to deal with the Iranian issue. A free Iraq will send a clear signal to reformers and dissidents, would-be journalists throughout the Middle East that a free society is available for you as well. And the question facing the Western World is, will we fall prey to the argument that stability is more important than forms of government, that what appears to be stable and peaceful—is that more important than how people live their lives, what kind of government? You just heard the Prime Minister speak eloquently about Zimbabwe. The lesson there is, forms of government matter.

Freedom has had a transformative effect in Europe, in the Far East. And the fundamental question is, will we work to see it have a transformative effect in the Middle East? Now, there are many doubters. I understand that, because there is some who say that perhaps freedom is not universal. Maybe it's only Western people that can self-govern. Maybe it's only, you know, white-guy Methodists who are capable of self-government. I reject that notion. I think that's the ultimate form of political elitism, and I believe an accurate reading of history says that freedom can bring peace we want. And it'll bring peace to the Middle East, unless of course we become isolationist, unless of course we lose our confidence, unless of course we quit.

And so yes, I'm sure there's—people will say, they could have done things better here and there. But I'm absolutely confident that the decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision.

Prime Minister Brown. And can I just emphasize: The passion for freedom, I think, is a universal value, and I believe that Iraq is a democracy today because of the action that we have taken. And our next task is to make sure that all Iraqis

feel that they have an economic stake as well as a democratic stake in the future of the country. And that's why the work continues.

On Europe, I'll meet Brian Cowen, the *Taoiseach* of Ireland, when I'm in Belfast later today. The legal position on the European treaty is very clear, that all 27 members must sign and, therefore, ratify the treaty before it comes into force. It is for each member to decide its own process for doing so. And we will continue our process of debating this in the House of Lords and then royal assent during the course of this week.

I think a short period of reflection is necessary for the Irish to put forward their proposals about how they will deal with this, and we look forward to the Irish coming to the European Council on Thursday with a view of what should be done. I believe that when David Miliband makes a statement to the House this afternoon following a meeting of the European foreign ministers, he will be able to say that all the European Union members believe that Ireland should be given this time to reflect on what they need to do and then make their proposals about how the situation can be resolved.

Iran/North Korea/Six-Party Talks

Q. Good morning, Mr. President, Prime Minister. I'd like to ask you both about Iran. President Bush, you've talked about it at every stop. A similar process, it seems, that is deterring North Korea from its nuclear ambitions has basically allowed North Korea to make progress toward nuclear weapons. At what point are you willing to draw a line here with Iran? And isn't Iran seemingly learning a lesson from the North Korea experience?

President Bush. Ed [Edwin Chen, Bloomberg News], I just strongly disagree with your premise that the six-party talks has encouraged Iran to develop nuclear weapons. I don't know why you have even come to that conclusion because the facts

are, the six-party talks is the only way to send a message to the North Koreans that the world isn't going to tolerate them having a weapon.

I mean, in other words, they are—we'll see what they disclose, but we, hopefully, are in the process of disabling and dismantling their plutonium manufacturing. We're, hopefully, in the process of getting them to disclose what they have manufactured and eventually turning it over. We're, hopefully, in the process of disclosing their proliferation activities, and it's a six-party process. I mean, the only way, in my judgment, to diplomatically solve these kinds of problems with nations like Iran and North Korea, nontransparent nations, is through a multilateral process where there's more than one nation sending the same message to the leaders of these respective countries.

And so I disagree with your premise. As a matter of fact, the Iranians must understand that when we come together and speak with one voice, we're serious. That's why the Prime Minister's statement was so powerful, and that's the lesson that the North Koreans are hearing. And so it's—I said the other day that, you know, one of the things that I will leave behind is a multilateralism to deal with tyrants, so problems can be solved diplomatically.

And the difficulty, of course, is that sometimes economics and money trumps national security interests. So you go around asking nations—by the way, it's not a problem for Great Britain—so you say to your partners, don't sell goods; you know, let's send a focused message, all aiming to create the conditions so that somebody rational shows up. In other words, people, hopefully, are sick of isolation in their respective countries, and they show up and say, we're tired of this; there's a better way forward.

And in order for that to be effective, Ed, there has to be more than one voice. So if I were the North Koreans and I were looking at Iran, or the Iranians looking at North Korea, I'd say, uh-oh, there are coa-

litions coming together that are bound tightly, more tightly than ever, in order to send us a focused message.

And you know, let me just say one thing about the Iranian demand for civilian nuclear power: It's a justifiable demand. You just heard the Prime Minister talk about the spread of civilian nuclear power, which I support—starting in my own country, by the way. We need to be building civilian nuclear power plants.

And so when the Iranians say we have a sovereign right to have one, the answer is, you bet. You have a sovereign right; absolutely. But you don't have the trust of those of us who have watched you carefully when it comes to enriching uranium because you have declared that you want to destroy democracies in the neighborhood, for example. Therefore—and this is the Russian proposal, by the way—therefore, we'll provide fuel for you, and we'll collect the fuel after you've used it so you can have your nuclear—civilian nuclear power, which undermines what the Iranians are saying, and that is, we must enrich in order to have civilian nuclear power. You don't need to enrich to have civilian nuclear power. The Russian proposal is what we support. This proposal wouldn't have happened had there not been a multilateral process.

And so what these nations need to see is, we're serious about solving these problems. And the United States spends a lot of time working with our partners to get them solved.

Thank you very much.

Prime Minister Brown. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11 a.m. in the Locarno Treaty Room of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Sarah Brown, wife of Prime Minister Brown; Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom; U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom Robert H. Tuttle; and President Robert

Mugabe of Zimbabwe. Prime Minister Brown referred to Secretary of State for Defense Desmond Browne and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs David Miliband of the United Kingdom; King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of

Saudi Arabia; and Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland. Reporters referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

Remarks Following a Meeting With First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland in Belfast, Northern Ireland

June 16, 2008

President Bush. Mr. First Minister, Mr. Deputy Minister, thank you for your hospitality. I'm excited to be here in Northern Ireland. And one of the reasons why is because I'm impressed by the progress that is being made toward peace and reconciliation. As a matter of fact, the world is impressed by the progress being made toward peace and reconciliation. And that obviously takes a commitment by leadership. And I want to thank you all for giving me time to hear your thoughts and to visit with you.

We talked about a lot of issues. We talked about the devolution of police and justice. We talked about the successful investment conference that took place here. And I want to thank my fellow citizens for coming, and I want to thank those from around the world who are paying attention to Northern Ireland. And the truth of the matter is this, is, you know, people who have come here and looked at the Government, looked at the situation and gotten to know the people realize this is a good place to invest. And ultimately, investment is going to help Northern Ireland realize its full potential.

And then finally, I was able to thank the leaders for their work in helping others reconcile their differences. The interesting thing about the progress being made here in Northern Ireland is that it's attracted the attention of societies around the world

that wonder whether reconciliation is possible for them. And Martin was telling me about his talks with some of the Iraqi leaders, about his—sharing his stories about how folks can reconcile. Northern Ireland is a success story. Obviously, there's more work to be done, but the progress made to date has been unimaginable 10 years ago.

And I want to congratulate you, thank you for serving your communities. And I wish you all the very best as you continue your journey.

First Minister Robinson. Thank you very much, indeed. Can I say that I'm delighted that President Bush, of his own choice, has recognized that Belfast is one of the major cities of Europe and has included it in this tour. It is a personal commitment that the President has shown towards Northern Ireland. And we are really grateful, not just for him coming today but for the work that has been done by the President and his ambassadors over the previous years, and particularly the work that has been done most recently for the investment conference.

The endorsement of the President for our investment conference goes a long way, and it lets people throughout the world know that Northern Ireland truly is open for business.

Deputy First Minister McGuinness. Can I say, just to echo what Peter has said,